



**The Basics of Human Happiness:
A Challenge to Understand**

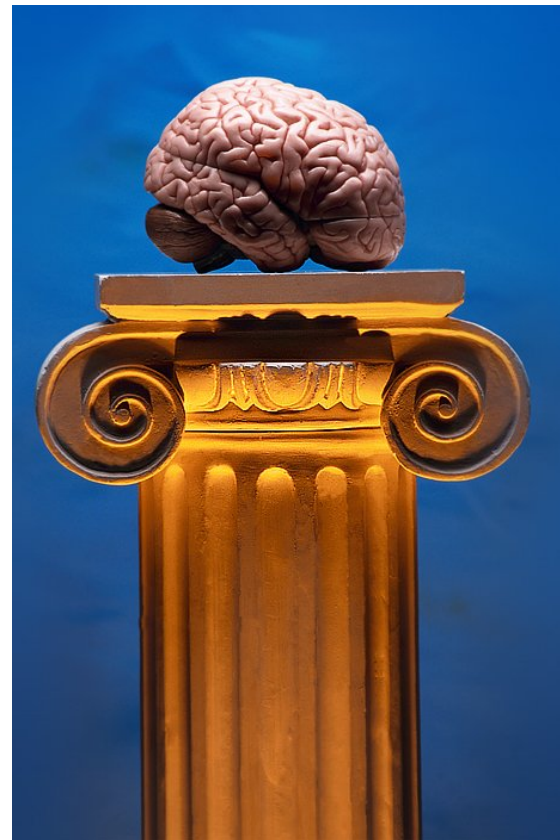
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1

Introduction What would it take?

I want you to consider that your life could be different.

Consider what it would be like if you had everything you wanted. Think of all the things you currently wish were different about your life. Perhaps you would not have kids. Perhaps you would have kids. Perhaps you would have had more fun when you were younger, or perhaps you would skip certain situations that still affect you. Maybe you would have a better car. Maybe you would have a huge house. Maybe you would be the CEO of a company.



Perhaps you would simply be independently wealthy. You would live where you want and in a lifestyle you can appreciate.

These things would make you happy right?

1

Introduction

What would it take?

But maybe you see things differently.

You are one of those people who do not believe that money and prestige makes people happy. You believe that real happiness is not found in a job, or a car, or a house. For those of you I submit the following suggestions:

Maybe things would be different between you and your romantic partner. Or maybe you would be single, or perhaps single & looking. Right? Only you would be more attractive to the opposite sex, and they would not only notice your outside attractiveness, but they would appreciate your internal person too.

Perhaps that's not totally it either though. Maybe you would simply have a much better relationship with your family or your friends.

Maybe you dream much larger and feel that you need to change the world and make a difference for millions of lives.

Maybe you would just be free from an unhealthy addiction.

Yes. One of those or many of those things would do it for you right?

1

Introduction

What would it take?

No.

Perhaps there's more involved for you. You believe that there is more to life than the things you can have and the people you relate to. You believe somehow that a better relationship with God will fix things. You think that if you could feel connected spiritually to a creator, then everything would click and make sense. Right? Longer than a month or a few months, this time it would last. You would be at peace with your maker as you go through everyday life. Maybe you would be so close to God that others would notice your balanced peace of mind.

One of the things I have listed above or a combination of these things is what you have been programmed to believe will bring happiness.

All of your life you have been in a struggle to achieve one or many of the things listed above. So that's it. Problem solved.

Now if only you could figure out a way to do one of, or a combination of the things listed somewhere in the paragraphs above, you will finally be happy.

Right?

2

Reality

A programmed past

So we are tackling something basic here.

The odds are however, that you will never achieve happiness. This is admittedly a strange statement that may not be completely honest. This might be because there were times when you remember being happy. So if it happened once, it can surely happen again. However, finding a way to *get and keep* happiness is complicated due to the simplicity involved in the process (i.e. we look too hard).

At the base of all human dilemmas is a human. There is the problem that keeps happiness a distant dream we wish were real. Humans tend to enjoy the hunt. In fact, some might go as far to believe that it is the challenge of *seeking* happiness itself that keeps humans alive. Maybe you have even thought that at times. Reaching for something is doing something and in doing something there is meaning, however miniscule, to all of this.

The truth is that there is no recipe for achieving happiness because happiness can not be *achieved*. It is either here or it isn't. We can call it a state of mind that is autonomous of actual circumstances. In fact,

2

Reality

A programmed past

we might even call it a genuine filter used to interpret life.

Your life is a series of events that will end in a final event: Death. This journey to death is what we are talking about right now. You might consider some sort of afterlife to exist following your last breath, but that does not help you know how to achieve happiness tonight or tomorrow or next year. An afterlife is a separate topic that people have considered for centuries. Since we don't really know anything about the afterlife it is pure speculation and thus is not a part of the reality you currently struggle in.

The scope of our quest for happiness therefore is inherently limited to the reality that we currently *do* have full awareness of: the journey or timeline of the "present you" and the "dead you".

Why bring up death and limitations when dealing with happiness?

This is where simplicity steps forward to answer. Happiness can be added to your moment-by-moment perception of present-day and future reality by acknowledging the simple fact that you are going to die. Death holds a special message for all of us: life has limits. By

2

Reality

A programmed past

understanding that life does in fact include certain limitations you will find quiet in your storms. What are these *limitations*? Consider that death can come violently or peacefully, and the exact moment of death also comes unexpectedly for many people.

In understanding death, you learn realistic expectations for a solid perspective about life, and as previously mentioned happiness is not in circumstances, but in the perception of circumstances. If we expect life to not include unexpected outcomes, if we expect to keep material things forever, if we expect to keep anything tangible or valuable in this life, or if we expect to keep health and avoid death our disappointments and errors will surface proportionately. It is in an accurate perception of reality that we quickly find our priorities easier to determine, update and manage as reality emerges.

Let us not reduce life to simply seeking pleasure and avoiding pain, though this is indeed a part of our nature. Isn't it? The problem is not in our basic natures. The problem is when we expect to *always* avoid reality's other elements: pain, unexpected events, and death.

3

Navigating A balance of pleasure & pain

Being happy involves balancing.

What is there to balance? ***Humans must balance the instinctual and natural mission of seeking pleasure and avoiding pain, while also filtering reality with the understanding that life will often not bring pleasure.*** This is easier said than done.

To process life like this effectively requires self-leadership, and most people would rather follow the lead of someone else. We see this all the time in everyday life. People will often either lazily, ignorantly or fearfully maintain dishonest filters about the real world and roll with things “the best they can” or as “the Lord will”.

Now doing the best you can to achieve pleasure and avoid pain while letting the chips fall where they may ***is*** the only healthy way to live. However, if “the best you can do” is to allow someone else the programming right of setting your values or lifestyle (essentially defining the “*best* you can do”) there may be unneeded stress or difficulties. Why would you ignore your own mind’s capability of figuring these things out for yourself? It reminds me of the little old man behind the curtain in the Wizard of Oz. Simply because the

3

Navigating A balance of pleasure & pain

“Wizard” said something was true, it was accepted as the truth, thus the self-worth and affected behaviors of those listening followed accordingly: voila. But were they not capable of achieving these things *without* the Wizard’s magical and obviously ascribed power?

Self-leadership involves respecting yourself- even if for the first time. It requires that you take a look at how you spend your time and your resources and determine if it is in fact “pleasurable”. This is complicated somewhat by the investment principle: it is sometimes desirable to risk today’s pleasure for future pleasure. The *freedom* to invest or not invest has a lot to do with our sense of happiness. You will notice that the term *risk* has been used. This is because there is no guarantee that we will be around tomorrow to enjoy the pleasure of investment, however the freedom of, and the decision to invest offers a certain pleasure of its own: like gambling.

Self-leadership involves a continual reevaluation of your current circumstances. You must regularly exercise your human freedom of deciding if you are adding pleasure or pain to your life experience- and then...do something about discrepancies. You will need some

3

Navigating A balance of pleasure & pain

courage to accomplish this. Why would this require courage? Because taking risks usually involves courage and so does going against the grain of what others have in mind for our lives.

What do others have to do with this process? Well at some point in all of our timelines, it is normal for us to unknowingly allow others to strongly influence our lifestyle or values. I cannot emphasize enough about how typical this sort of bondage is. We essentially allow ourselves to be trapped or controlled without knowing it. Sometimes we *do know* its happening and we feel that the compromise of making ourselves different for someone else will give us pleasure through the companionship of the other person (or people). By taking a look at these situations from the outside we recognize them as a form of codependence.

It requires courage to conduct our lives uniquely because others try to convince us that we will somehow become “unacceptable” if we do. Feeling unacceptable is a form of mental pain.

In order to justify changes in our lifestyle or moment-by-moment

3

Navigating A balance of pleasure & pain

conduct, we must allow the idea that it is not someone else that determines our “appropriateness”. This is a risky change that could cost us if we are only partially interested in self-leadership. When a human assumes the role of leader over their decisions they must also stand by these decisions.

If you encounter pain due to a decision made in error, you accept that pain as a normal part of human reality and your happiness is not greatly impacted. It was the best you could do, and humans are naturally great at both good and bad decisions. It is appropriate for a human to make decisions, and thus experience pain or pleasure as a result of those decisions. It is also normal for unexpected or unfair situations to occur, and we can do our best to prevent such injustices from occurring in the future when it’s possible to do so. We can only do what we can do, and controlling other people is not one of those things. We can, however, learn to influence or suggest “healthy” change in people or groups, but that form of leadership is another topic altogether and as we have noted, can lead others to bondage if we are not careful.

3

Navigating A balance of pleasure & pain

Self-leaders are not overly critical of their mistakes and yet they also improve future decisions in order to perfect the pleasure – pain ratio of their existence.

Fear must somehow be eliminated from the equation of decision making. When people make decisions while respecting the emotion of fear –especially the fear of disappointing others- more errors will occur, including errors of not taking action when needed. This spells regret- a greater pain because at that point we recognize that we allowed someone else (either directly or indirectly) to keep us hostage from being ourselves at the time.

When you find that someone has invaded your freedom to decide “the best you can do” you should update your lifestyle or make adjustments to regain autonomy.

It is your death. It is your life.

It is your happiness.

